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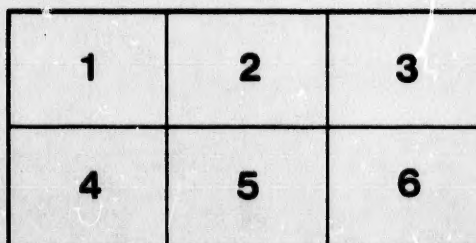
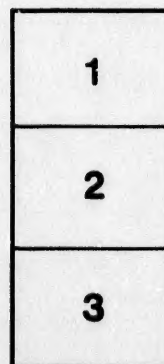
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à

Young Men's Reform Club,

MONTREAL.

ADDRESS

BY

HON. L. S. HUNTINGTON, M.P.,

ON

“REFORM PRINCIPLES,”

Monday, 25th April, 1881.

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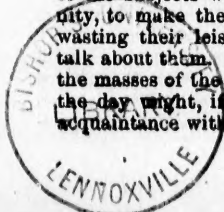
REFORM PRINCIPLES.

The above was the subject of an address delivered before the members of the Young Men's Reform Club of Montreal, on Monday Evening, April 25th, 1881, in the Ladies' Ordinary of the Windsor Hotel, by the Hon. L. S. Huntington, M.P. There was a very large attendance of members of the Club, besides many veteran members of the Liberal Party; the fair sex also turned out in force. Mr. J. J. MacLAREN, Q.C., was in the Chair, and on the platform with the Hon. Mr. Huntington was the Hon. Mr. Mercier. The CHAIRMAN, shortly after eight o'clock, called the meeting to order, and in a few brief words introduced the Hon. Mr. HUNTINGTON, who, on coming forward, was received with loud cheers. He spoke as follows:—

I have seldom prized anything more highly than I prize the honour of addressing the Young Men's Reform Club to-night; and though my task may be above my powers, I will not salute you with deprecation or apology. The old astrologers studied the horoscope in vain, if good fortune does not follow those who are born under the influence of favouring stars. Now, I regard this Club as the offspring of a rehabilitating public opinion whose cynosure is that constellation of Reform principles, memorable in all history and tradition as fruitful of good works. It is not the bantling of fashionable politics, nor does it bask in the sunshine of patronage and power. The ship is not rigged to catch the favouring breezes, but it undertakes to navigate perilous seas, and at a time which tries men's souls. It has rough work to do amidst the medieval darkness which had re-enveloped us. But you are sure of a safe and prosperous voyage so long as you keep a sharp eye upon that polar star of reform under which you have been happily born, and shape your course for the greatest good to the greatest number of the people. Dr. Channing counsels his hearers to take part in the politics of their country. These are the true discipline of a people and do much for their education, and he urges his hearers to labour for a clear understanding of the subjects which agitate the community, to make them their study instead of wasting their leisure in vague, passionate talk about them. The time thrown away by the masses of the people on the rumours of the day, might, if better spent, give them acquaintance with the constitution, laws,

and institutions of their country, and he adds that, in proportion as men thus improve themselves, they will cease to be the tools of designing politicians. I do not think you could have a better motto, or that you could undertake nobler work. Your task is with those who study to ameliorate the condition of your fellow-men.

I do not now presume to define your curriculum, but as you manifestly cannot cover the whole ground, I suppose, as a Club, you may devote yourselves to politics, chiefly. The popular idea of politics has grown up, I fear, from the course of unworthy politicians, and hence the cartoonist's definition of it as "a nasty thing which defiles whosoever it touches." Human nature is apt to disclose kindred characteristics in whatever walk of life it is enlisted. It is full of weaknesses which more or less bring discredit upon its noblest trusts. It is equal to high and holy aims, but is often tarnished by selfishness, and upset by temptations. No doubt men's relations to state-craft often subject them to cruel tests. The influence of power, and patronage, the rivalries of universal competition, ignorance, prejudice, intolerance are the difficulties of governing men; alas, even in countries when men govern themselves, and it must be admitted that in constitutional countries, which are wholly or chiefly ruled by the popular voice, these difficulties are startling, if not discouraging. If in free countries the people are to rule through improper motives, men often ask, would it not be better if the people did not rule at all? And in countries where ignorance or corruption dominates there is no doubt a barren field for free institutions, and men may have to choose between the comparative purity of Imperial sway and the wide-spread demoralization of popular rule. But coming to our own times, and especially to our own country, we may safely expect better things. There are quicksands, indeed, but we must study to avoid them. In spite of the jeers of the corrupt and the skeptical, we must maintain a high order of political morality. We must, under all discouragements, teach the people that corrupt administration is not a clever trick to be condoned or laughed over, but an unpardonable offence against the State, which chiefly injures themselves and flows directly from their own corrupt or careless exercise of the franchise.



To inculcate such lessons will, I am sure, be the favourite work of young men of this Club. It is a cardinal doctrine of the Reformers in this country that, though the people may often err, they never remain permanently in the wrong, and that their mistakes of to-day will be rectified by a more enlightened public opinion later on. But the leaders of thought and culture, such as this Club is to become, must labour to enlighten that opinion. Discussion, argument, information, persuasion must be circulated in honest and unstinted measure, so as to instruct the masses as to public topics. Politics, as lexicographers define it, "signifies the science of Government, that point of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a nation or State, for the preservation of its safety, peace and prosperity, comprehending the defence of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest, the augmentation of its strength and resources and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals." So you see it presents a rather comprehensive and respectable field of human effort. Frequent infelicities of administration have given the word a very different popular and conventional significance with which I do not propose to quarrel, beyond observing that every scope of human effort is liable to abuses, and that I have no patience with the men who persistently lampoon a great evil which they make no adequate effort to remedy. And this leads me to speak of an important and perhaps growing class of competent men among us, who refuse to enter public life on the ground that it is not what it should be.

Why do they not come forward and help to make it better? Who taught them that the State, which shelters and protects them, has not a right to claim their best service? Why should they shirk and leave as good men as themselves, with no greater responsibilities, to bear alone the heat and burden of the day? But you will be told that all would be well if there were no party politics in the State. Party maligns and crushes its opponent, corrupts its neighbour, turns Parliament into a bear garden, and the country into a vast amphitheatre of corruption, slander and filth. There is a grain of truth in this; but party is what public opinion makes it or permits it to be. It is, after all, a representative machine. Its function is to obey the behests of the people. An unfaithful Minister, a dishonest representative, a slanderous official hanger-on, all depend upon the people for support, and cannot long veil their true character. If these are corrupt, the people will soon know it, and can apply a ready remedy if they choose. Here, again, the field for public teachers is

open, and, if one may say it without blasphemy, the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Teach the people that they are the pillars of the State; that the effects of maladministration reach them first. They pay the money. Their country suffers the disgrace, which hovers like a black cloud over their very homes, and threatens the future peace of those who cluster about their own hearthstones. Here is earnest work for earnest men. It is hopeful work. The people have understood, and they will understand again. They are engrossed with their own affairs, and as to public matters they need constant admonition—line upon line and precept upon precept. Men require to be rallied as well to their political as their religious duties. When you succeed, the country is safe, and when you fail you need not denounce religion because its professors have sinned, nor politics because its votaries have been unfaithful.

Faith in the people of England was the ground of the late Prince Consort's hope in the constitutional future of that country, though it must have been due to a dread of their possible carelessness and cupidity that, as is said, he declared in a moment of discouragement that Parliamentary Government was only on its trial there.

But Parliamentary Government means a government by party. This is a political corollary of the doctrine that the majority shall rule. It is an heritage of Responsible Government, bequeathed to us, after years of struggle and conflict, and even bloodshed, by our fathers, who achieved along with it the imperishable glory of a noble success. In this country they had suffered for years as men worthy of freedom have never suffered without a struggle.

Their voices, if not unheard, were persistently unheeded in the councils of the country. A little band of office-holders and favourites held the Royal ear, which was deaf to the people. They ruled what was called a free Province in the teeth of the people, and with no higher rights than those they left to their children and successors of our day, the rights of a self-styled "party of gentlemen." The noblest page of Canadian history records how they were finally, by an overpowering opinion, moulded and instructed by daring and patriotic leaders, broken like a piece of glass. Since that time we have enjoyed with varying fortunes and restricted to the necessities of our jurisdiction, the British system of Parliament-Government. It involves Government by party. Individuality is checked and restrained by it. Theoretically there are but two parties in the State. Each consists of a body of men, who, though not enjoying a defined constitutional status, undertake, *quoad* the administration of pub-

lic affairs, to think and act together. The majority sustain the Government of the day, which must enjoy their confidence, exercise the patronage and shoulder the responsibilities of administration. The minority, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, has a scarcely less important function to fulfil. They must watch those at the helm, criticise their acts, and keep the country alive to their short-comings.

All this is elementary, and I only refer to it in a passing allusion to the discussions about Government by party, which attract some attention in these days.

If we can pass over what Sir Erskine May calls its "minor details, the ambitious intrigues and jealousies of statesmen, the greed of place-hunters and the sinister aims of faction," we shall find that party has levelled many a blow at the wrong, and in England and elsewhere has been more powerful than the King and his nobles. Parliamentary parties habitually maintain opposite principles of Government.

May tells us that the germs of party were generated by the Reformation, and that the early Puritans recognized the advantage of such organization, and made their way into Parliament under its aegis in their first great struggle against the prerogative. As liberty develops it is easy to see why the Court should denounce party as faction, and why those who were more nearly allied to the people should depend upon party organization and extend the franchise to strengthen it. It is not strange, therefore, that in a form of government like that of England or Canada the history of party should be the contemporaneous history of the country, and that a machinery, by the aid of which so much in the way of amelioration has been accomplished, should have endeared itself to the people. While we are compelled to admit that party has wrought evil as well as good in history, we must ask those who would destroy it to explain what would they put in its place? It is only another name for associated effort directed to common aims, and maintaining a common discipline. It works always under the keen and competitive eye of a rival, and public opinion is speedily informed if it goes, or is suspected to go, wrong. The ballot becomes, perhaps, a new element in calculating the influence of party. So far, it has displayed hostility to Governments. While, therefore, a Parliament elected for five years may maintain its leaders in office despite the reaction of opinion outside, yet the ballot may be the easement of the party conscience at the polls. As a rule, a worse thing might happen the country than that party changes should be more frequent than they have sometimes been, and the ballot may afford the relief which anti-partisans desire.

And they would have a further instalment, as indeed both parties and the public would find relief if the petty patronage which perplexes party leaders, and often disgraces party administration, were relegated to some competent distributing power. Herein lies the chief danger to the system and to the State. These camp-followers corner the spoils. Here flourish your party tramps—the scum of your organization. Search not among them for virtues nor principles. They know only patronage and follow the men who have it to bestow. They practice the warfare of pilfering, of slander, and of demoralization. They follow the carcass; their breath is foul, their touch is a taint, and their support is a moral weakness. But their influence for evil is as vast as their appetite for plunder. It is practical to eliminate the grosser influences of this element, and thus protect both parties from grievous torment and the State from a constant menace.

But we have seen that party discipline represses individualism among its members. To a certain extent each man is supposed to yield his opinions to the general sentiment and for the general good. This consequence flows more or less from the very nature of voluntary association. Men must accomplish common objects with a common aim; and if you seek only mechanical results your organization will be the more efficient, the more it works like a mere machine. There must, of course, be intelligence to guide it. But where all thought and volition is surrendered to the master mind, you demand obedience but not intelligence from the rank and file. If the leaders can read and write and think, it is a manifest convenience when stolid acquiescence is yielded lower down; mechanical discipline is a strong point and has contributed greatly to success with one of the great parties of this country. Its Parliamentary troops are thorough regulars. Those who think at all, think only in such grooves as are carefully and judiciously prepared for them. Among them, so far as the world sees them, there is no independent thought; they learn the tactics and obey the discipline; they are elected to support Sir John, and they do it, perhaps honestly, but stupidly, and without wavering. Such soldiers made an Emperor of Napoleon, and they have accomplished lesser success among us. Perhaps interchange of thought, diversities of opinion, freedom of discussion would best have suited an intelligent political life, but these might have weakened their battalions and estranged them, so they have chosen the better and safer course of displaying a stolid, stubborn and mechanical attachment. It might be more noble if the

soldier's arm were nerved by the soldier's conviction, and it may yet be found that the new Prussian system has taught us the use of those greater and better qualities of the soldier, who strikes not merely in obedience to command, but under the inspiration of an honest love for fatherland and individual devotion to patriotic sentiments. When that day comes there will be new men at the helm, and Sir John and his cohorts will have been superseded.

In defining the cardinal principles of the two parties in England, May puts on the one side authority, and popular rights and privileges on the other. Authority, of course, primarily thinks only of maintaining itself; while popular rights suggest an infinity of discussions and divergencies which necessarily throw cast-iron rules of thought and action to the winds. To the Tory party, sheltered by authority, and struggling to maintain things as they are, well-regulated discipline has been as easy and natural as that streams should flow down the hill-sides; but for Reformers, who have changes and ameliorations to win, there is a public opinion to be formed and educated by all those inquiries, researches and discussions which engender diversities and render uniform thought, and consequently party discipline, always difficult and sometimes impossible.

Yet I would not envy the Tories, if they banish free thought and discussion in politics. Better to cultivate the greater intelligence, even though we tread the more difficult path. Our labour is always to enlarge the area of popular rights and liberties. Often the people who profit by our work, rally against us, who have accomplished it. Our duty lies in our patient efforts to see that they are better informed. In this way, even as a party, we may have individual fields of labour. Our party is not responsible for our independent opinions till it has considered and espoused them. Nay, even our colleagues may combat and oppose us till we have seen our error, if we are wrong, or till we prevail, if our position be well taken. But the activity of thought, the discussion of principles, the public education goes on neither repressed nor discouraged by the tyranny of party. If the Liberal party undertakes the administration of affairs its programme, and not the isolated dictum of this or that man, indicates the policy for which it is responsible to the people. But it cannot restrain thought or speech exercised within prudent limits. Our adversaries, unaccustomed to such freedom themselves, are slow to understand it, and even our friends have sometimes revolted against the disturbing agencies which it often evolves. But the fact re-

mains, that an intelligent appreciation of public questions involves a broad and free discussion of them, and explains why stolid discipline is more possible to the party of authority than for that party which seek to win privileges for the people, and studies to elevate them to the level of the reforms they have achieved.

And so I conclude that there is, on the one hand, no cause for young Reformers to fear that party discipline will restrain their zeal or their inquiries; or, on the other, that they will be made responsible for the vagaries of their brethren of like general faith. Moreover, it is only fair to admit that even our adversaries seem to tolerate within their ranks some preliminary divergence, if we may judge by some of the men who to-day sit cheek by jowl among them in high places, but who sit there only as chieftains of certain schools of thought, which, in the rough, are no strangers to intolerance, and exist chiefly in virtue of the antagonisms with which from time to time the country has been embroiled and tormented.

How inscrutable, after all, are the ways of Providence as to what it permits and what it withholds in relation to human affairs! One day we see the patient, weary worker, after a life devoted to the single purpose of earning blessings for his country and his kind, falling by the wayside, neglected and forgotten!

What needs he the praise of a love-written record?

The name and epitaph graven on the stone? The things he has done, let them tell the story.

Let each be remembered by what he has done.

And the next day the ranting, the self-seeker, the preacher of intolerance, after a few years of mischievous disturbance of the public tranquillity, soars high to undeserved public caresses and honours.

But more or less, whether as political or social Reformers, we have to consider the means of reaching the popular understanding. I cannot close these allusions to political parties without touching briefly the party press. It furnishes the political literature of the masses. It speaks with the authority of a daily or weekly visitor. The press is the *vade mecum* alike of the rich and the poor. It is the preacher of the family hearthstone—powerful for good when its influence is regulated, but an evil genius if it goes astray. It should be controlled and written by fair men, of great gifts and high culture. It is one of the most powerful, and should be among the most respectable of the public teachers. The party press does not always reach this high standard. Sometimes it is malevolent and false, and panders to the lowest tastes and passions. You see an untruthful para-

graph and detect it, perhaps from its tone, perhaps from your own knowledge. But its political slime may be like manna from Heaven to multitudes who, from long habit, have learned to cherish its teaching as their gospel. One-half your public men are traduced and maligned by it, and one-half your people believe them to be villains or thieves. Sometimes it is the organ of public men, and speaks only to exalt them, or it is the enemy of public men, and speaks of them only to accomplish their ruin. Sometimes, again, it takes higher ground, and aims at a noble career. The higher aims of party are greatly aided or hindered by the press. It may embitter party strife and create widespread demoralization; or, it may rouse men to an exalted sense of duty, and lead them to works which rank but little lower than the angels.

Here, as elsewhere, the wheat and the tares grow together; and men should understand of the press how beneficent it may be in usefulness, and how dangerous when dishonestly moved. It is a part of the machinery of party which a healthy and well-instructed opinion might control as an agency, almost more than human in the common cause of mankind. There is another agency of political propagandism, and I suppose you will use all means to disseminate your views—too little cultivated among us—but a power of persuasion and instruction—I mean the power of utterance. On the platform and on the stump, facility of public utterance is not less usefully called into requisition than even in Parliament itself. I am not about to lecture you on public speaking, but it is a gift which, as young men, you should practice and cultivate. The people like it: it pleases, while it instructs them, and magnetises them as well, and opens the heart and quickens the brain of the hearer, till he is prepared to receive from your storehouse of information and learning all the rich truths and theories you desire to disclose and impart. But you ought to cultivate a high order of eloquence, not in tone, and gesture, and rhetoric, though these are all good in their way, but in courtesy, and facts, and candour. Your story will be none the worse told if you give your adversaries the fullest of fair play.

Your cause will not suffer if you admit the candour and even usefulness of the men you oppose in politics; for on one side they have duties to fulfil as sacred and as binding as your own. The State plants two parties in the field of politics, whose duties are adverse and whose principles are theoretically irreconcilable, but their struggles ought not to be personal nor to generate private enmities. It is a shame to see good men, perhaps both to blame, discourteous

and inimical, because their public duties have kept them asunder. Perhaps your birth may herald the dawn of a wiser and better era within which politics shall be shorn of its grosser acerbities, and social life shall be independent of political rancour. Model your speeches after these views, and you will be hailed by wise, candid folk, as public benefactors, and you will meet your own reward in a higher self-respect and a pleasing consciousness of duty well performed. If you would pardon the schoolmaster, I should say a word to those young men who fear the ordeal of public speaking. You say you can't, but have you ever tried? You lack confidence, but have you ever tried to gain it? You can think, but you cannot express your thoughts—how do you know? If you met a stranger at the cross-roads asking the way, would you not tell him? Would you say, "I know well enough, but I can't explain myself"? No, you would tell him readily enough, just as you can learn to tell anything you may have to say, with a little confidence and practice. Speech is a noble gift, and you may find it a great power when you can use it. Never speak when you have nothing to say, but never fail to speak when the occasion calls you, when you have aught to say which will benefit others, and which they would be glad to hear. True eloquence is a rare gift, and the orator, like the poet, is, despite the authorities, born and not made. But we do not eschew the divine melodies, because we cannot rival the great musicians, and you and I may consecrate the gift of speech to good works, though we cannot imitate the Burkes, the Websters, the Gladstones and the Brights of the great oratorical arena.

Democracy was a terrible word in the past, and to multitudes meant only disorder and license. But it need not alarm us in countries whose citizens are patriotic and intelligent. In modern times it has on the whole justified itself where it has been fairly tried. Political reforms always tend in its direction, since it only means government by the people. The disciples of authority have denounced it as Republicanism, but it has practically worked in harmony with monarchical checks and balances. In our day, thanks to the example of free institutions, even Republicanism is making its way. Of the three greatest nations on earth, two are Republics, and a third constitutional monarchy is more democratically governed than even the other two. Some of our grandfathers would turn in their graves if they could know this, but the developments of freedom are upsetting many old-time theories. They predicted that Reformers,

if not restrained, would precipitate such results; but they little dreamed of the blessings to flow from the events which fulfill these predictions. But we cannot rest on our oars. We must advance or recede. The rights of the people and the independence of the State are as essential to liberty now as they were in the by-gone years, when the ancient enemies of free government assailed them, and the reactionary forces are as dangerous among us to-day, and pant for the mediæval oppressions. When brave men in perilous times contend for their liberties, no labour is too great, and they are wont to display a martyr's love of suffering and sacrifice; but it has happened that their children, while enjoying the ameliorations they have won, are indifferent as to the means of maintaining them. Our duty is plain,—to emulate their examples and push on their good work—fellow-travellers with them in the great high-way of freedom which stretches down the long corridors of history, blending the patriotism of our own age with the early apostles of the civil liberties we enjoy.

The history of Democracy, its peril and triumphs, is full of encouragement and instruction. A great writer has said that the popular influence and the corollary of intellectual and material progress must be accepted as a natural law; and not long ago, at Aberdeen, so high an authority as the Right Honorable W. E. Forster, said:—"There is no use mincing the matter; unless the world goes back, Democracy must go forward. The will of the people must more and more prevail. We cannot prevent numbers ruling." And he added—"We must only persuade them to rule well." It may be said that in our times and country there is little to fear for popular influence, which may be easily instructed by the agency of the press and other means of public discussion. True, the franchise is extended, thanks to the great work our reform fathers have done; but the agencies abound for superseding and misleading it. Demagogues roam up and down the land to deceive the ignorant, and rich and powerful influences will buy the mercenary and bully the timid voter if the enactments which, after long struggles, the Reformers have secured, be not strictly and rigidly enforced; and, to a great extent, these growing forces are a new and startling danger. They are the offspring of trade and commerce in a hundred fields, where monopoly controls the masses. If these men were all corrupt and combined, our case might indeed be hopeless. Beecher says there are four railroads in the United States which, if they acted together, would elect the President. In times past in

our own land we have seen a railroad essay to make and unmake Governments. In the States the manufacturers are supposed to have contributed for the regulation of the tariff, such vast sums as were difficult to resist, though it may have been a public duty to resist them. But we may look for better things, and herein lies the safety of our people; but they may be watchful all the same and remember that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Teach them to believe that every attempt untuly to restrain their views is an interference with their personal rights, that their responsibilities of citizenship should elevate them to the level of the high privileges the State has conferred upon them.

The election laws passed by the Liberals are our safeguards, and the corrupt subscriber to election funds will have hereafter to disclose the amounts and the motives before the Courts. But a man's heart is half won when you have trusted him, and your conquest should be completed when you have convinced him that, in serving the State, he is but serving himself and his household. No doubt there are exceptional natures. Humanity is weak, and Judas was among the Apostles; but in dealing with the people it is politic to exercise faith in them, and there is less necessity to provide for exceptional cases than to proclaim general principles which plead for recognition because they are just and fair. Nevertheless the air is full of warning that, as the power of Democracy increases, the statesmen of constitutional countries should extend the machinery of culture and intelligence, to the end that citizens may become widely imbued with devotion to national liberty, ennobled by the love of God as the great fountain of good, and united by a love of country. We are for weal or woe making history every day, and you and I may bear a humble hand in tracing its outlines. We cannot all be Pym and Elliots, but their successes were due to thousands who followed and sustained them. We, too, may follow if we do not lead, and it will be a crowning glory for our generation if we shall have so laid, broad and deep, the foundation of civil liberty, that our countrymen in all time to come may date the safeguards they enjoy by our teachings.

I wish we had time to trace the history of Reform through the weary years of European struggle. In Switzerland, the Netherlands, in France, in England, everywhere were the same conflicting currents of opinion which, under different names and forms, arouse the controversies of our own age. The happiest illustration of

the growth and exercise of constitutional liberty is furnished in the history of England. It was not a plant of rapid growth, and at first did not engage the attention of the masses. How their interest developed and strengthened is a matter of history, which is too long to recite here, but I cannot allude, even so cursorily, to such a topic without a reference to the teachings of the great men who in the reign of James, of Charles, and in the time of the Commonwealth, fought for free Parliamentary Government and civil and religious liberty. We need neither justify nor condemn the acts of the Kings, or their great Parliamentary antagonists. They represented conflicting principles, and, according to the manners of their times, they waged the terrible contest; but the influence of Parliament, whatever its excesses, was exercised in the main for the defence of public liberty. The great leaders maintained old constitutional doctrines or defined new ones, which have withstood the shocks of time, and are preserved and established as the bulwarks of British freedom. The names of Pym, Hampden, Vane, and their associates, shine resplendent among the statesmen and the patriots of any age or country. They were equal to their great duties in the most trying times of English history, and it was well said by the first of American orators that the finest bursts of Parliamentary eloquence were to be found in the discussions of those days, even imperfectly as they have been handed down to us. What gems even now are preserved! One might cull from these speeches words of wisdom for a book of constitutional proverbs such as the world has never seen. "I had rather," said Pym, while imprisoned, "suffer for speaking the truth, than that the truth should suffer for want of my speaking it." Sir John Eliot, while awaiting that long imprisonment which wasted his precious life, was summoned before the Council table to explain a speech he had made in Parliament, and he preached the true doctrine of liberty, in memorable words:—"Whatsoever was said by him, and in that place, and at that time, was said by him as a public man, as a member of that House, and that he was and always will be ready to give an account of his sayings and doings in that place whensoever he shall be called into it by that House where, as he taketh it, it is only to be questioned; and in the meantime being now but a private man, he would not trouble himself to remember what he had either spoken or done in that place as a public man." And, again, as if these men could actually foresee some of our public investigations, and the form and manner of them, Pym said at the trial of Strafford, "My Lords, if he could be his own

witness and his own judge, I doubt not he would be acquitted." These brief sayings suggest principles which had been held sacred in British law and Parliamentary usage, until they were questioned and violated by a versatile authority, in this country, in a memorable case which, I presume, has been only temporarily forgotten.

The progress of Reform has pursued the same general lines in all constitutional countries, and, in proportion as it has prospered, the people have grown intelligent and free. The history of our own Lower Canada, though newer, and recording perhaps less of the tragic and heroic than that of older States, is yet fraught with useful lessons and illustrations. I can only touch a point here and there, though it has been well enacted by the people and well written by various authors. The first Imperial legislation relating to Lower Canada, was the Quebec Act of 1774. It defined the boundaries of the newly acquired jurisdiction, continued the old civil laws, and proclaimed the English criminal code; granted free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion, and continued to the clergy their accustomed benefices. Prior to this time there had been some uneasiness as to which system of laws prevailed—the English claiming that their own laws had been granted them by the King, and the French claiming the dominance of their ancient customs and usages under the authority of capitulations and treaties. This Act was unpopular in England, and the Corporation of London remonstrated against the Royal assent to the Bill. They complained, if imposed on all the inhabitants, it rendered the persons and properties of loyal subjects insecure and precarious. They claimed that the Bill established the Roman Catholic religion, while no legal provision was made for the free exercise of the reformed faith; and that the whole legislative power of the Province ought not to be vested in persons appointed by the Crown.

Even in this early day the designation "Dominion" was employed, and writers spoke of poor Canada as a vast wilderness skirting the north side of the St. Lawrence and the shores of the great lakes. As an incident of the controversies of the day, the Congress of the United States addressed an elaborate appeal to the inhabitants of the Province of Quebec, justifying their appeal to arms against the mother country, and asking for sympathy. They deprecated the thought that differences of religion could prejudice the Canadian people against them, and they instanced the example of the Swiss Cantons to prove that union might exist between Catholic and Protestant

States. The appeal concluded with the prayer that the Almighty might dispose these people to join them to put their fate, whenever they suffered injuries, not on the feeble resistance of a single Province, but on the consolidated powers of North America. These were brave words, but it does not appear that one *habitant* in a thousand ever heard of the address. About this time Wedderburn, the King's Solicitor-General, by His Majesty's order, prepared a report upon the affairs of Lower Canada. The document is interesting as indicating the policy of the times. It suggested free institutions, pointed out how an Assembly chosen by the people was the only representative body possible. It referred to the 4th Article of the Treaty of Paris, which grants the liberty of the Catholic religion to Canada, and provides that the Catholic subject may practice his religion according to the rights of his church, so far as the law of England would permit, and it agrees that this qualification renders the article itself of little effect.

It deals with the Jesuits and maintains that should they be tolerated, they would soon take ascendancy over the priests; that the education of the people would fall into their hands, and declares that no measure of credulity could lead one to suppose that they would ever be faithful subjects of England. In 1791, Parliament passed the Constitutional Act, dividing the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. Mr. Pitt introduced the Bill, and expressed the hope that it would settle the competition between French and English settlers in the colony; and he expected to accomplish the result by establishing a Local Legislature in each Province.

Mr. Fox denounced the idea of dividing the English and French inhabitants, and declared it most desirable that they should coalesce into one body, and that distinction of people should be extinguished forever. It is noticeable that in Mr. Pitt's reply he fixed the population of Upper Canada at 10,000, and that of this Province at not more than 100,000, though other authorities double the number. Great exertions were made to prevent the passage of this Bill; and a delegate from the people of Quebec, addressing the House of Commons at the Bar, showed his faith in the future of Upper Canada as follows:—"What kind of a government must that upper part of the country form? It will be the very mockery of a Province. Three or four thousand families scattered over a country some hundred miles in length, not having a single town, with scarcely a village in the whole extent! Is it not making weakness more feeble?"

But the resistance was unavailing; the Provinces were disunited from that time until the Union of 1841, when they became what is now known as Old Canada.

The first Provincial Parliament met at Quebec on the 17th of September, 1792, and Mr. Panet was chosen Speaker of the Assembly. His brother, expressing himself during the debate as to the choice of Speaker, made use of these tolerant words:—"I will explain my mind on the necessity that the Speaker we are about to choose should speak equally well the two languages. In which ought he to address the Governor? Is this an English or a French colony? What is the language of the Sovereign and the Legislature from whom we hold a Constitution which assembles us to-day? What is the general language of the Empire? What will that of this whole Province be at a certain epoch? I am a Canadian, the son of a Frenchman; my natural tongue is French; but thanks to this ever-subsisting division since the cession of the country, I have only been able to obtain a little knowledge of English. My testimony will not, therefore, be questioned; and it is my opinion there is an absolute necessity that the Canadians, in the course of time, should adopt the English language as the only means of dissipating the repugnance and suspicion which difference of language would keep up between two people united by circumstances and necessitated to live together."

It is not clear that the best would have been accomplished, even if time had verified this prophecy. A great deal of discussion ensued as to the language to be employed in the House, and it was resolved to keep the journals in two languages—the one English, and the other French; with a translation of the motions originally made in either language.

The Public Accounts were first sent down by the Governor to the Assembly in '94. Various matters of discussion and irritation occupied the attention of the Executive and Legislative authorities from time to time. But, finally, in 1810, the Assembly passed a resolution in defence of its own privileges, to the effect that every attempt of the Executive Government and the other branches of the Legislature against that House, whether in dictating or censuring its proceedings, or in approving the conduct of one part of its members and disapproving the part of others, was a violation of the Constitution, a breach of the privileges of the House, and an attack upon the rights and liberties of the people. This was in 1810. The American war shortly followed, whose influence united all parties in the bonds of patriotism and defence;

and for some time Constitutional questions were in abeyance. But both parties began to comprehend the contest which, however honestly, was waged in a spirit of restraint and aggression on one side, and loud demands of wider liberty on the other; until at length the government of the country seemed impossible, the constitution was suspended, and England, thoroughly aroused to the dangers of the position, sent Lord Durham to inquire into the political difficulties.

I do not allude to the unhappy outbreaks of '37 and '38, except to mention them as a consequence of violent constitutional controversies, and to admit that, mistaken and unpremeditated, as they probably were, on the part of the best men who were leaders in them, they cleared the air and paved the way for the remarkable concessions which followed. Few indeed of the reforms which these men demanded have been refused under the constitution which they won and which we enjoy, and for the moment shutting our eyes to the faults of both sides, we may give them a high place in history as the fair representative men of conflicting shades of thought which have more or less made war upon each other in all constitutional history.

The one has resisted change and distrusted the people, while the other has indulged a sanguine faith in the possibilities of popular rule. The one clings to traditions, and trusts nothing to change but in compromise; the other is restless and ambitious to achieve liberty and maintain it. Each, in its proper bounds, may fulfil a useful part in government. But it may be permitted young Liberals to ask, with just pride in the cause they have espoused, if the policy of the reactionists had prevailed, where would have been the blessings we now enjoy under the beneficent influence of progressive and popular views? The battle thus fought and won by a past generation rang with thrilling incidents and conflicts akin to those of older times and countries. The principle of popular government once established, war was waged upon undue monopoly and privilege all along the line. It was still the old battle—the Reformers striving to extend the domain of popular rights, and the Tories to maintain the *statu quo*. Decentralization of influence was demanded on the one hand, and centralization of authority on the other. Nobody now denies that the rule of the majority has multiplied wealth and intelligent self-reliance among the people, and generally has realized the hopes of the Reform pioneers; and here, as elsewhere, you will find, in estimating the claims of parties, that the Tories have not initiated agitations calculated to enlarge the scope of

popular rights or curtail the exercise of unrestricted authority; while to the Reformers is due, so far as I remember, the credit either in initiation or execution of all the great measures for these ends.

The Confederation of the Provinces may be cited in dissent, because both parties coalesced at that time, but it is doubtful whether its eager promoters studied all conditions which might have made the union more satisfactory, and, perhaps, even more permanent. They did not consult the wishes of the people by any means known to the Constitution; they restored the old nominative system to the Second Chamber, against which at least old Canada had formerly declared; they did not so provide for such a union as would diminish the general expenses of Government, and the scheme has led to difficulty and extravagance, which I thought then, as I still believe, more careful consideration at the outset might have avoided. I pass over, without comment, the facts that the scheme was pressed upon our politicians by the Imperial authorities in troublous times as part of a grand plan of national defence, towards the expenses of which, however, they did not materially contribute; that, in this sense, it was the offspring of Imperial difficulties which had grown out of the American war, and was advocated in England on far different grounds from those which were put before the people of this country; and, finally, that it was made the occasion of disturbing a proposed union, not federation, of the Lower Provinces, which, if it had been consummated, would have brought them into the general confederation later as a single province with a saving of vast expense and sectionalism which the actual system entails.

It is startling to contemplate the real paternity of this great scheme. A conference was called by the Governor-General of Canada, at Quebec, consisting, so far as Canada was concerned, wholly of Ministers of the Crown, and, from other provinces, of men named by the respective Governments, and those men, to use the caustic words of an able pamphleteer of the time, in about fourteen days of actual work, turned out a constitution which was for all time to govern the free people of half our continent. Moreover, the deliberations were secret, and the adoption of this scheme involved the startling condition that the Legislature should commit suicide by destroying its own powers and that its constituents should have no voice in the matter! Wanting sympathy, common interests, and a knowledge of each other, the Provinces were yoked together by superior force to work out a great destiny, which they neither com-

prehended nor cared for. As the result of such a policy embarrassments were sure to follow, and only a miracle such as gave the Israelites dry land across the sea could have prevented them. The Reformers who contributed to it have cause to regret the manner of its adoption when, to this day, powerful majorities push through objectionable schemes which should be submitted to the people, but whose provisions have, up to the last moment, been carefully concealed from them—relying for a precedent upon the action of the Confederation coalition. There was nothing new in the general features of the scheme. A confederation of the Provinces, federal or legislative, had been advocated before by theorists, but were never submitted to the people, and had been condemned down to the moment of its adoption by its leading promoters. Amidst some dangers it now bids fair; and it is the interests of all the Provinces to maintain it; but, beyond the party convenience of its sponsors, there was no necessity for indecent haste, and time and consideration might have provided against dangerous elements of discord which have worked, and may do so hereafter, many embarrassments. As a matter of history I believe that when the Confederation Act was before the British Parliament, our delegates who swarmed there, were told frankly by British statesmen that the scheme was the beginning of an end—the complete independence of the then proposed Dominion. Of course the communication was confidential, but it leaked out indirectly. I made this statement in Parliament years ago, in the presence of nearly all who had been delegates. Some of them greeted me with assenting "hear, hears," and others remained significantly silent.

There has been, doubtless, reaction in England. The American questions have been settled by the Washington Treaty. A decade of tranquility, for the present, at least, has removed all such pressure. But it was a strange position for loyal men, professedly representing the people of the country, to tamper with questions which might thus affect even their allegiance. I opposed Confederation for reasons which may have been right or wrong, but which convinced many better men than myself; but I was loyal to it as any man when it was accomplished. I have seen some of my fears dispelled, and have to hope that others may, through wise administration, not be realized; but there seems no harm, in discussing the question, to take a peep behind the scenes at the forces that move us.

It promised, however, many blessings to many people, which it has not conferred. To England, to the Lower Provinces, to all the world, it promised reduction of tariffs, and

assimilation towards Free-Trade. It sent out in the early days to Brazil and the British and Spanish West Indies, a commission which was to pave the way for the cultivation of commercial relations between us and those countries. Brazil is a country larger than the United States, larger than Europe, with a revenue and expenditure much larger than ours, having an important trade, and whose people were to consume our products and send us their own in exchange. But when the Commissioners returned and reported these good things, the Government, by their very first tariff, upset their labours and slammed the door in the face of all arrangements. Then to be further inconsistent with their professions, then and now, they sent Sir John Rose to Washington to negotiate a Reciprocity Treaty, which he did successfully enough with the Washington Government as to the preliminary draft. General Grant and Mr. Fish were anxious to aid him, but Congress refused concurrence. But in these days you will be surprised to hear that these *soi-disant* friends of the manufacturers had agreed to a treaty which admitted reciprocity in manufactured goods. I charged them with this in the House at the time, to show the insincerity of their professions that they were indisposed to discriminate against British goods. There was a faint attempt at denial, but I knew whereof I affirmed, for I had read the proposed Treaty. And these gentlemen, after a few years' expulsion from office, returned to power, promising a tariff in the interest of Canadian Protectionists which should discriminate against England, and the special organ of the Prime Minister told us, if England does not like it, so much the worse for England!

There is no doubt that countries bound by a common allegiance should have common interests, and it seems unnatural that we should expect the benefits of protection from the Empire while we engage in commercial alliances hostile to her interests, and our necessities point in the direction of commercial hostilities. The time-worn phrase, "Ships, colonies and commerce," is losing its force. Men may be loyal in a political sense, even to the extent of shining by reflected light; but commerce has no sentiment; she buys in the cheapest and sells in the dearest market. We should all resist a British policy which compelled us to buy British goods. We might admit the plausibility, but should resist its application. The English people may be restive, but the position is critical, and the English Government understand it. The Reciprocity Treaty discriminated against British

goods in a sense, and in favour of foreign producers. Our Commissioners went out to Brazil accredited by the British Government; not limited in their instructions beyond a hint not to violate the favoured nation clause of foreign treaties. In Sir John Rose's time, Sir John Macdonald proposed to discriminate against British goods by consenting to reciprocity in manufactures. In late past years, when Colonial subjects were more discussed in England than they are now-a-days, the *Times* declared that England would not interpose objections to any trade intercourse Canada might undertake; and there is, on the whole, reason to think that, delicate as the question is, a satisfactory solution is not impossible. The House of Commons discussed it at great length ten years ago, and a large number of members would have voted then for a Customs Union with the United States.

On a division, after the same debate, the entire Opposition voted for, and the Conservatives opposed, a proposition to ask from the Imperial Government for a concession of the right to Canada of entering, through her own agents, into negotiations with foreign powers as to commercial treaties. The Conservatives opposed it bitterly at the time. The Imperial authorities have since conceded something in that direction. Sir John Macdonald, as representing Canada, was a Joint High Commissioner at the time of the framing of the Washington Treaty, and the late lamented George Brown occupied a corresponding position in the late fruitless negotiations for a Reciprocity Treaty. Circumstances have changed since that debate, and a Customs Union is not a practical but a theoretical question. Neither country is yet prepared to accept it. But, as will be seen, the arguments against it, on the ground of British objections, are weakening year by year. A popular fear that it would result in political absorption will likely be dispelled by time. The laws of gravitation do not apply to nations. We may trade without selling ourselves. The flourishing ten years of the Reciprocity Treaty did nothing to Americanize our people. A Governor of Canada once refused a grant to build a road to the frontier, lest American influence should travel over it. Times change. Many people thought him wise then, but nobody thinks so now. Our people are in constant communication with the Americans by railroads and general commerce, and they would be better satisfied if they traded more. We never refuse intercourse with a man because we are not big enough to thrash him, especially if he is of our kindred—our flesh and our blood. We may

feel profound good-will towards men whom we would not entertain as partners.

The speaker said that this fear of absorption by our Southern neighbours had, in some quarters, been a kind of intermittent epidemic since the days of the Conquest. If anybody proposed a policy to which these people demurred, they argued that it meant annexation, and that its promoters were disloyal. This stereotyped bid for popular dissent was based upon a knowledge that general public opinion was antagonistic to any such change. In this way the speaker himself had been often falsely denounced as an annexationist. The people of this country were right in desiring to maintain their liberties and their autonomy. Apart from commercial questions, they had nothing to gain by a union with the United States. They were younger, indeed, but the road to prosperity was as open to them as it had been to their neighbours. It was wiser for both parties to work out, each in its own sphere, the constitutional problem. Canada, indeed, had her own burdens, but she was exempt from many disturbing agitations, in which union with her elder sister would involve her. While, as for the States, greed of territory was understood by her best men to be vicious and dangerous. To absorb Canada would be to whet her appetite for further aggregations. Mexico would follow next, and all the mongrel Spanish-American States. The already over-weighted spirit of the Thirteen Colonies which achieved her independence would be endangered in the maelstrom of ignorance, passion and prejudice thus imposed upon her administration.

Providence had given the two peoples verge and scope enough for the most lofty political ambitions. As to prosperity and power, we, of course, fell far behind fifty millions of people who were a hundred years our seniors.

But we were far ahead of the union of a century ago, and were striding towards wealth and greatness. Our dangers were chiefly those of administration, and even if our growth was slower, it might be more secure. We often lamented that the great stream of European immigration should be so largely diverted from our shores. But nations were not born in a day; and history might yet record of us, that the reason we had been able longer than our neighbours to preserve our liberties, was to be found in the fact that our populations had not been overwhelmed by avalanches from foreign shores; but had been able by their superior numbers and opportunities to absorb the new comers and mould them into our citizenship and an intelligent adherence to our views.

No doubt, as the country grows, the present Colonial state would be found too restricted for convenience. The great problem which would, sooner or later, demand solution was simple enough to state and difficult enough to solve. Full of pride in the traditions and the glories of the Empire, we yet are not participators on equal terms with the English people; and some day our statesmen will have to answer, How they are to secure for the people of this Dominion a relation to the Empire which shall make them in all things the equals of the Imperial Islanders themselves?

Some speak of independence, but that severs the connection, and the question is not pressed now, since the settlement of the Imperial troubles with America by the embarrassment of ten years ago. Others recommend us a federation of the Empire, which was at least full of patriotic plausibilities. It meant representation for the colonies in the Imperial Parliament, and perhaps it meant, for the Irish, the restoration of a Parliament on College Green. It might settle old difficulties and it might create new ones. It embraced questions of geography, homogeneity, representation, defence more vast and diversified than have ever yet engaged the human understanding. It was a great question to be discussed, for which there was no time then, but the speaker commended it to the study of his hearers. He hoped it would never come upon us as our own Confederation had done, cut and dried to meet temporary party exigencies. Public opinion should be thoroughly instructed about the whole subject before action was proposed, and he commended all those topics to the careful study of his young hearers. In recent years, in Lower Canada, the question of religion had occupied a good deal too much attention in political discussions. Speaking from memory, he might quote an incident in the life of Daniel O'Connell. A Catholic peer, he thought Lord Norfolk, had been constantly annoying O'Connell by letters and speeches intended to affect the Irish Catholic people. The Tory peer found O'Connell's teachings dangerous to the Catholic faith, and was very garrulous in saying so. O'Connell, replying, said in effect: "My Lord, I love the Jesuits; I regard them as the standard bearers of education and civilization. One of these holy fathers once wrote: 'The man who crowds religion into political discussion is a fool, or worse.' The Jesuit who penned this remark, my Lord, meant nothing personal, neither do I."

The doctrine of the Liberal Party was that all religious denominations were equal before the law. This principle secured

Catholic emancipation and ample protection to all religious creeds. It had been popular here to represent that Liberals should be opposed as irreligious by men who enjoyed the fruits of Liberal labours. So far as the speaker might represent the views of the Liberal Party, it maintained religious liberty for all. But it also maintained that like all countries—Catholic or Protestant—even Spain and Portugal—every country with a pretence to civilization, the State must protect, and have the means of guarding itself against any invasions of the constitutional rights of the people. The Liberals have been in power here, and have shown no disposition to restrain the widest religious liberty, and they would never, while the speaker supported them, diverge from their tradition, nor truckle to one creed at the expense of any other. These doctrines had lately been affirmed by all the Courts and the highest ecclesiastical authorities.

Alluding to the current local controversies of party, which the speaker declared it had been his intention to avoid, he desired his young hearers to study them carefully. The tariff, which was a great question of commercial and political economy—the Pacific Railway which involved vast interests, and was testing the engineering, financial and administrative skill of the country—had been abundantly discussed in Parliament, whose debates were easily accessible to all. A study of these, he did not doubt, would lead his hearers to conclusions favourable to his party. It was difficult now to tell what would be the full fruition of the zeal, the learning and the ability of the Reform leaders as displayed in those debates, but it was not too much to believe that the great Western connection which the Government had abandoned, and which the Syndicate, with a commendable liberality and foresight, had determined lately to build nevertheless—the *Sault St. Marie* road—had been saved or secured to us by the untiring efforts of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition at the last session.

MR. HUNTINGTON, continuing, said:—My address has been too long, too cursory, and too superficial. It might fill a book instead of a lecture. I have aped neither the philosopher, the historian nor the politician; but I have sought to delve among the treasures, plucking here a flower, and there a tassel or a gem, as the mood seized me, or as my theme suggested; and I shall not have spoken in vain if I have quickened in a single heart a love of rational liberty. I see before me men of all creeds and na-

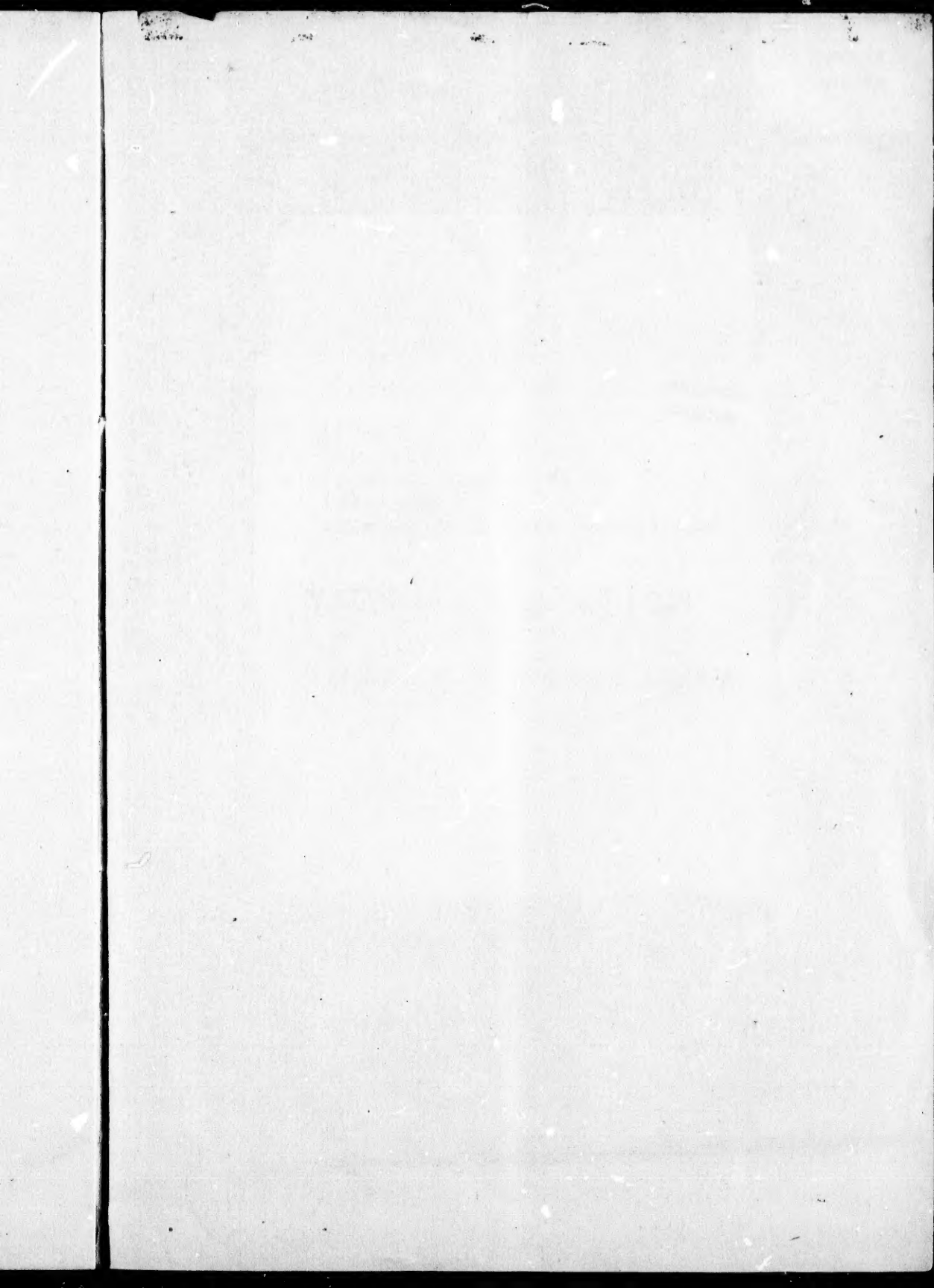
tionalities. I have sought to show you how to merge your differences into a common citizenship at once tolerant towards others, and intelligent as to your own views.

Liberty knows no barriers, and is the common heritage of freemen. Under her aegis religion walks hand in hand with popular rights. She demands our fealty. We are as responsible tonight in our duties to her, as were the people of by-gone times in their historical trials. We are citizens of a young, free State, with some achievements and vast possibilities; but freedom has scarcely experienced a vicissitude in history which might not befall her here. As to our internal life, we are, perhaps, the freest people in the world to-day, but we have the elements which have destroyed older countries by creating experiences and arousing controversies which might be pushed to dangerous limits among us. We have enough of demagogues, if the field were open, to set the world by the ears; and our only safety lies in the prudence, the tolerance, and the patriotism of our people. We have entered upon a grand national experiment, and the result, under God, depends on ourselves. We claim to be owners of half a continent, and we administer the best parliamentary system the world has ever seen. Canada is a favourite Dominion and ally of the greatest and the freest of people. But we are only safe if we appreciate freedom and resist its enemies. Now sectional jealousies, and anon national and religious dif-

ferences disturb our mixed populations and multiply dangers to the State.

We are descended from the nations foremost in the graces of culture, the science of government and the spread of liberty throughout the world. Let us be worthy of our traditions. So may we divide with constitutional countries the honours which belong to the historical apostles of liberty, and better still, may attach to Canada the lustre of noble service to the cause; and ensure for her the blessings of a permanent and constitutional life, at once the mission and triumph of popular government.

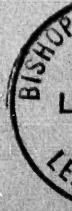
At the conclusion of the able address, which was loudly applauded, and listened to with the deepest attention throughout, Mr. Ed. Holton, M.P., rose and moved a vote of thanks to the hon. gentleman. This was seconded by Hon. Mr. Mercier, who remarked that he felt it an honour and a pleasure to be again with the young men of the Reform Club, and to be able to listen with them to the eloquent words of wisdom and advice which had fallen from the lips of the Hon. Mr. Huntington. He was with them in everything for the good of the people, and he trusted they would work hard and inculcate the grand principle of being Canadians above everything. He had much pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks. This having been conveyed to Hon. Mr. Huntington amidst great cheering, the meeting immediately afterwards broke up.



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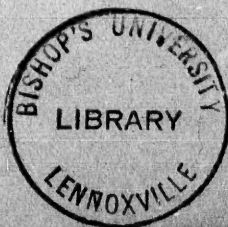


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